

THE TRYOUT PLAYBOOK

What Coaches Actually Look For (And How to Stand Out)



INTRODUCTION: The "X-Factor"

Most players think tryouts are strictly about who is the fastest, who is the strongest, or who has the best technique.

They are wrong.

By the time you get to tryouts, your skills are roughly what they are. You can't double your speed overnight. But you **can** double your value to a coach in a single afternoon. Coaches aren't just looking for talent; they are looking for players they *want* to coach for the next six months. They are looking for the "X-Factor."

This guide is your cheat sheet. It contains the psychological triggers and "invisible skills" that make coaches scribble a star next to your name on their clipboard.

Let's get to work.

CHAPTER 1: The Parking Lot Test

The tryout doesn't start when the whistle blows. It starts the moment your car pulls into the lot.

Coaches are observant. We watch how you walk in. We watch how you carry your gear. We watch your body language.

The Pro Protocols:

1. **Carry Your Own Bag:** Never let your parents carry your equipment. If you can't carry your bag, you can't carry the team.
2. **Look the Part:** Shirt tucked in. Shoelaces tied tight. No jewelry. If you look sloppy, coaches assume you play sloppy.
3. **The "Early" Standard:** If you are "on time," you are late. Arrive 15 minutes early to stretch, acclimate to the environment, and get your mind right.

>> **PRO TIP:** Walk up to the check-in table, look the staff in the eye, and state your name clearly. Confidence starts with your voice.

CHAPTER 2: Eye Contact & Coachability

Talent gets you noticed. Coachability gets you selected.

Nothing turns a coach off faster than a player who looks at their shoes when being spoken to, or a player who rolls their eyes when corrected.

The "Lock-In" Technique:

When a coach is speaking, imagine there is a laser beam connecting your eyes to theirs. Do not break the beam.

- If they are explaining a drill: **Lock in.**
- If they are correcting your form: **Lock in.**
- If they are talking to the whole group: **Lock in.**

The Nod:

When a coach gives you feedback, give a firm nod and say, "Yes, Coach." Even if you don't fully understand yet, acknowledge that you heard them. A silent player is an invisible player.

CHAPTER 3: The "Mistake Response" (The 3-Second Rule)

Here is a secret: We expect you to mess up.

Tryouts are stressful. The ball will slip. You will miss a shot. You will make a bad pass.

We don't care about the mistake. We care about what happens *immediately after* the mistake.

- **The Amateur:** Puts hands on head, looks at the ceiling, pouts, or jogs back slowly.
- **The Elite Player:** Uses the **3-Second Rule.**

The 3-Second Rule:

You have 3 seconds to be frustrated. Then, you must "Flush It."

1. Acknowledge the error.
2. Fix your body language immediately (chest up, chin up).
3. Hustle to the next play.

If you miss a ball and immediately sprint to get it back, you impress the coach *more* than if you had caught it perfectly. We need fighters, not perfectionists.

CHAPTER 4: The "In-Between" Moments

What do you do when you aren't in the drill?

This is where 80% of players lose points. When you are standing in line waiting for your turn, you are still being evaluated.

Do NOT:

- Lean on teammates.
- Check the stands to look at your parents.

- Sit on the ball/bench unless told to.

DO:

- **Watch the person in front of you:** Learn from their reps.
- **Cheer:** Be the loudest person in the gym. "Good rep, Kate!" "Let's go, Chris!" Energy is a skill. If you bring energy, you make the team better just by being there.
- **Be First:** When the coach says "Bring it in," be the first one sprinting to the huddle. When the coach says "Water break," run to your water, drink, and run back.

CHAPTER 5: The "Scramble" Mentality

There is usually a point in tryouts where things get chaotic. A scrimmage, a live play, a loose ball.

Be the player who pursues.

Coaches love "Hustle Stats." These are things that require zero talent, only effort.

- Diving for loose balls.
- Sprinting to cover an open spot.
- Helping a teammate up off the ground.

If a coach sees you help a teammate up, they know you are a culture builder. If they see you sprint when you are tired, they know you have heart.

BONUS CHAPTER: For the Parents (The Car Ride Home)

To the Athlete: Show this page to your parents.

Dear Parents,

The number one thing that destroys an athlete's confidence is the car ride home. Please avoid the "Post-Game Analysis."

Avoid asking:

- "Why did the coach put you over there?"
- "Did you see Matthew make that mistake?"
- "You should have been more aggressive."

Instead, say this:

- "I loved watching you play today."
- "You looked like you were having fun."
- "I'm proud of how hard you worked."

Let the coaches coach. Let the players play. You are their safe space, not their second coach.

CONCLUSION: Leave No Doubt

When you walk off the court today, you want to be exhausted.

Regret is heavier than fatigue.

If you use your voice, make eye contact, hustle between drills, and shake off mistakes instantly, you will have done everything in your power.

Now, go take your spot. You earned the right to be here.

– Coach Lee Green